

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 EUR-12 /079 W
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P R 120753Z SEP 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3573
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (GARBLED THROUGHOUT)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, HK
SUBJECT: UNHCR OFFICIAL HOMAN-HERIMBERG VISIT TO HONG KONG/MACAU

1. UNHCR OFFICIAL HOMAN-HERIMBERG ARRIVED IN HONG KONG ON
SEPTEMBER 10 AND MADE VARIOUS CALLS FOLLOWING DAY,
INCLUDING VISITS WITH GOVERNOR, ACTING POLITICAL ADVISOR
AND CONSUL GENERAL. HE WILL VISIT MACAU SEPTEMBER 12 AND
FLY TO BANGKOK ON SEPTEMBER 13.

2. CONGEN BRIEFED HOMAN-HERIMBERG ON HONG KONG/MACAU
SITUATION, STRESSING HEAVY REFUGEE INFLUX HERE, WHICH IS
EXPECTED TO REMAIN HIGH AT LEAST UNTIL NOVEMBER, AND
RESULTANT EFFECT ON HONG KONG GOVERNMENT (HKG) WHICH IS
SHOWING SIGNS OF STRAIN. HOMAN-HERIMBERG INDICATED HIS
AGREEMENT WITH THIS ASSESSMENT AND EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN
AT HIGH CARE/MAINTENANCE COSTS IN HONG KONG, WHICH HE
SAID WERE \$650,000 MONTHLY. HE ADDED THAT IF REFUGEE
CASELOAD CONTINUES TO INCREASE, MONTHLY COST COULD
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APPROACH \$1 MILLION MONTHLY.

3. CONGEN STRESSED ADVANTAGES OF MORE EXTENSIVE
USE OF MACAU. HE POINTED OUT THAT USE OF MACAU HAS
PROCEEDED SLOWLY BUT THAT IT IS CERTAIN THAT MACAU
COULD ACCOMMODATE MANY MORE REFUGEES. THIS WOULD NOT
ONLY RELIEVE BOAT REFUGEE DENSITY IN HONG KONG AND

REDUCE COSTS SIGNIFICANTLY BUT WOULD ASSIST HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IN RESISTING PRESSURE ON IT REGARDING ITS LIBERAL REFUGEE POLICY. HOMAN-HERIMBERG GAVE MACAU OPTION A SYMPATHETIC HEARING BUT QUESTIONED WHETHER USE OF MACAU AS ACCOMMODATION SITE WOULD TEND RELIEVE HKG FROM ASSISTING UNHCR IN FINDING ACCOMMODATIONS HERE. HE SAID IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH HKG HE HAD FEELING THAT HKG NOT COMPLETELY NEGATIVE ABOUT PROVIDING UNHCR WITH LAND OR REFUGEE SITES. CONGEN AGREED AND STATED HE DID NOT THINK IT LIKELY THAT MORE EXTENSIVE USE OF MACAU WOULD AFFECT HKG WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH UNHCR IN LOCATING HOTEL-TYPE ACCOMMODATIONS, ALTHOUGH SUCH FACILITIES MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO LOCATE. PROSPECTS FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCY ASSISTANCE IN LOCATING AND OPERATING HOSTELS FOR REFUGEES WERE DISCUSSED, WITH HOMAN-HERIMBERG EXPRESSING SOME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT LOCAL VOLAGS WERE NOT MORE ACTIVE IN THIS REGARD. WE INDICATED IRC PROBABLY WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP AND HOMAN-HERIMBERG INDICATED HE WOULD FOLLOW UP THAT POSSIBILITY.

4. HOMAN-HERIMBERG STATED THAT UNHCR OPERATION HERE IS NOT ADEQUATELY STAFFED. WE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OPENING THIS PROVIDED TO URGE THAT AT LEAST TWO UNHCR REPS BE PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED TO HONG KONG AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO SUGGEST THAT HONG KONG/MACAU BE ESTABLISHED AS SEPARATE ENTITY APART FROM SAMPATKUMAR, WHO HAS HEAVY REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN MALAYSIA. HOMAN-HERIMBERG CONFINED HIMSELF TO NOTING THAT ALL ALTERNATIVES WOULD BE CONSIDERED. WHEN HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS INVOLVED IN SETTING UP A SEPARATE UN JURISDICTION IN HONG KONG/MACAU, WE TOLD HIM WE DOUBTED THAT PRC WOULD BE TROUBLED SINCE IT HAS MADE CLEAR ITS BENIGN INTENTIONS TOWARD HONG KONG AND IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY NOT BE WORRIED ABOUT OFFENDING VIETNAM ON THE REFUGEE SITUATION.

5. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION WHETHER HKG WOULD BE INVITED TO KUALA LUMPUR UNHCR MEETING, HOMAN-HERIMBERG STATED U.K. SOLVED THAT QUESTION BY ASKING HKG TO ATTEND AS A MEMBER OF ITS DELEGATION. WHEN WE SUGGESTED THAT MACAU GOVERNMENT BE INVITED. HOMAN-HERIMBERG REPLIED THAT UNHCR WAS RELUCTANT TO INVITE MACAU, BUT HE WOULD LOOK AT SITUATION DURING SEPTEMBER 12 VISIT THERE.
SHOESMITH

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Message Attributes

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